

High schools

Elkins has challenge of living up to billing

By MK BOWER
Houston Chronicle

Pick a poll, any high school poll, and at the top you'll find undefeated Elkins.

The Knights (26-0) were the Chronicle's preseason No. 1 and didn't budge from that position at any point. Elkins is top-ranked in both the Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association and the Texas Baseball News polls. Student Sports? No. 1. Baseball America? *Numero Uno*. USA Today? Top-ranked there, too.

But all the accolades and attention that come with being tabbed the best in the land mean little once postseason play begins.

With four Region III championships, including the last two, and a 1995 state crown under his belt, Elkins coach Rick Carpenter doesn't need to be reminded of that. A fabulous regular season is incomplete if it isn't capped with a pair of victories in Austin in early June.

"We are trying to put that behind us," Carpenter said. "We talked about that after we played our last regular-season game (a 20-2 win over Willowridge). I talked to them and told them this has all been great, but the so-called second season is going to start soon, and that's what we have had our eye on all along."

"I stressed to them to go home over the weekend and think about that and all we have in front of us. Think about the opportunities, and let's come back out and try to get geared up for the second season. I tell the kids that this is our championship to have."

Based on their experienced starting lineup and the 1-2 pitching punch of James Loney and Wardell Starling, it was easy to select the Knights as the team to beat. As expected, Loney (8-0, 0.53 ERA) and Starling (8-0) have been phenomenal in leading a staff that has posted a 1.55 ERA and 213 strikeouts in 149 innings.

Where the Knights have surprised is on offense.

Elkins graduated several starters from a team that was far from potent with the bat, but that hasn't stopped just about everyone in the lineup from having a career season.

"I never figured on that at all," Carpenter said. "We're putting a lot more runs on the board this year than we did last year, and we graduated some pretty good hitters. The guys that came back from last year have improved, and that is definitely something to be happy about."

"Lots of times, kids that have good junior years will come back and maybe press and try too hard and maybe have a subpar year. But all of ours have come out and had banner years. And we've had a couple of youngsters step up and play well."

Elkins is averaging 12 runs per game, sparked by four starters hitting at least .475.

Loney leads in hitting (.563), home runs (eight) and runs batted in (46). Another senior, David Leatherwood, handled the switch from third base to shortstop with ease while compiling a .475 average and a team-high 12 steals.

Junior second baseman Chad Huffman (.523, six homers, 35 RBIs) showed flashes of bril-

Baseball rankings

Class 5A

1. Elkins	26-0
2. Klein Oak	24-2
3. Dulles	19-4-1
4. Clear Creek	22-5
5. Cypress Falls	18-6
6. Tomball	19-6
7. FB Austin	22-5
8. Bellaire	21-6
9. Pearland	23-8
10. Humble	19-6
11. A&M Consolidated	20-7
12. Spring	19-2
13. Spring Woods	21-6
14. Kingwood	18-7
15. Lamar	18-7

Class 4A/Others

1. Brenham	22-5
2. La Grange	22-3
3. Friendswood	20-5
4. PN-Groves	21-5
5. Forest Brook	21-5
6. Jasper	19-7
7. Episcopal	27-6
8. St. Thomas	20-9
9. New Caney	19-8
10. Second Baptist	17-11

liance last season and has been consistently stellar this year. Starling has six homers and 32 RBIs and is hitting .439.

"It's going to take the same thing that it always does," Carpenter said. "First of all, you've got to have a good ballclub, and we certainly have that. But I think we are going to have to catch a break ... We're going to have to win a flip here or there, when somebody wants to play one (game) when we want to play two-out-of-three, and a break or two here and there in a game. We're going to have to get that, too, to go all the way."

Notes — Members and prospective members of the Houston Area Baseball Coaches Association will meet on Sunday at 1:30 at Waltrip High School. Tournament and regular-season schedules for 2003 will be discussed, as will nominees for all-star games.

Final baseball standings

DISTRICT 15-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Klein Oak	13	1	24	2
Tomball	11	3	19	6
Spring	10	4	20	7
The Woodlands	7	7	19	10
Klein	5	9	13	12
Klein Forest	5	9	11	13
Conroe	4	10	10	18
Westfield	1	13	3	22

DISTRICT 16-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Cy Falls	11	3	18	6
A&M Cons.	10	4	19	6
Langham Creek	9	5	16	8
Cy Creek	8	6	14	12
Bryan	6	8	15	11
Jorsey Village	6	8	11	13
Cy-Fair	5	9	10	16
Cy Springs	1	13	1	22

DISTRICT 17-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Bellaire	10	2	22	5
Lamar	10	2	18	7
Westside	10	2	17	8
Sharpstown	6	6	8	11
Westbury	4	8	8	13
Worthing	2	10	14	15
Madison	0	12	0	12

DISTRICT 18-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Milby	12	0	19	7
Sam Houston	9	3	9	12
Reagan	9	3	12	10
Chavez	6	6	10	10
Austin	4	8	6	11
Yates	2	10	2	10
Washington	0	12	0	12

DISTRICT 19-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
North Shore	12	3	17	7

District Season

	W	L	W	L
Katy	11	4	18	7
Taylor	11	4	17	8
Hastings	9	6	12	12
Elsik	8	7	10	14
Mayde Creek	4	11	7	15
Cinco Ranch	2	13	5	21

DISTRICT 20-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Elkins	16	0	26	0
Dulles	13	3	19	4
Austin	12	4	19	6
Clements	10	6	16	10
Terry	8	8	19	10
Kempner	7	9	13	12
Hightower	4	12	7	19
Bush	2	14	5	19
Willowridge	0	16	0	19

DISTRICT 21-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Spring Woods	12	2	19	2
Stratford	11	3	19	8
Memorial	11	3	15	11
MacArthur	6	8	10	14
Nimitz	5	9	9	18
Eisenhower	5	9	8	16
Aldine	4	10	7	17
Northbrook	2	12	4	18

DISTRICT 22-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Humble	13	2	23	8
Kingwood	12	3	21	6
Doble	10	5	14	13
South Houston	4	11	11	14
Rayburn	4	11	9	16
Pasadena	2	13	4	21

DISTRICT 23-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
North Shore	12	3	17	7

Deer Park	10	5	15	13
Bay, Sterling	9	6	16	9
West Brook	9	6	15	11
Baytown Lee	5	10	8	17
Central	0	15	5	22

DISTRICT 24-5A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Clear Creek	11	3	22	5
Pearland	10	4	21	6
Brazoswood	9	5	18	7
Clear Brook	8	6	13	11
Galveston Ball	7	7	16	10
La Porte	6	8	12	13
Clear Lake	4	10	10	14
Alvin	1	13	7	18

DISTRICT 18-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Brenham	9	1	22	5
Montgomery	7	3	17	8
Magnolia	6	4	15	9
Waller	4	6	14	10
Huntsville	4	6	13	10
Navasota	0	10	7	18

DISTRICT 19-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Jasper	9	1	19	7
Lumberton	8	2	17	8
Livingston	5	5	8	13
Ozen	5	5	11	12
Vidor	3	7	10	12
Silsbee	1	9	7	17

DISTRICT 20-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
PN-Groves	10	0	21	5
Nederland	7	3	17	9
WO-Stark	6	4	13	13
LC-Mauriceville	5	5	12	16
PA Jefferson	1	9	4	15
PA Lincoln	1	9	3	18

DISTRICT 21-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Forest Brook	12	2	21	5
New Caney	12	2	19	8
Willis	11	3	19	6
Oak Ridge	9	5	15	10
Dayton	5	9	9	15
Crosby	4	10	5	18
Caney Creek	3	11	8	15
Smiley	0	14	6	18

DISTRICT 22-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Waltrip	13	1	18	5
Davis	10	4	13	9
Scarborough	10	4	12	6
Sterling	9	5	10	6
Furr	6	8	8	12
Kashmere	5	8	9	10
Wheatley	3	10	3	10
Jones	1	13	1	13

DISTRICT 23-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Friendswood	14	0	20	5
Santa Fe	11	3	17	8
Dickinson	11	3	15	9
Texas City	7	7	14	11
La Marque	6	8	10	14
Channelview	5	9	12	11
Galena Park	2	12	10	14
C. E. King	0	14	3	20

DISTRICT 24-4A

District Season				
	W	L	W	L
Bay City	10	2	19	6
Lamar Cons.	9	3	16	10
El Campo	8	4	19	7
Brazosport	5	7	10	12
Foster	4	8	9	15
Columbia	3	9	12	12
Angleton	3	9	9	13